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SUBJECT: CRIME IN HONDURAS VICTIMIZES POLICE AS WELL AS CIVILIANS; POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT OF CORRUPT POLICE

1. Napoleon Nazar Herrera, head of the Honduran General Administration for Criminal Investigation (DGIC - investigative police under the Public Ministry), recently told reporters that gang members have killed at least 10 police officers this year. An increasingly typical killing occurred November 17 when a police investigator was killed near his home in Comayaguela. According to police informants, members of the gang "mara Salvatrucha" had staked out the investigator. A search led to the capture of five gang members in possession of a list containing the names of approximately 20 police officers that they had allegedly planned on killing in the next few days.

2. In addition to the list, the gang members also had bulletproof vests, grenades, and information to which only personnel of the DGIC would have had access. Nazar alleged that organized crime and corrupt members of the DGIC have been responsible for these murders. Some DGIC personnel allegedly involved may have already been identified by the police. Nazar's main concern was the fact that confidential information fell into the hands of gang members.

3. On December 16, yet another DGIC officer was killed by gang members who allegedly were lying in wait for him as he was returning home from the city of Danli. They assaulted him on a public bus and killed him when he reached for his weapon. While there is no apparent connection between any of these killings, the involvement of gang members in police murders underscores the real battle underway on Honduran streets as the police continue to implement President Maduro's "Safe Honduras" program.

4. In another interesting police development, one newly assigned DGIC officer was discovered to have been participating in "home invasions" (break-ins) while in training and was caught by accident when an invasion victim was at the DGIC HQ and saw the criminal - thinking he was under arrest - and to his surprise he was told the man was a DGIC police officer. This incident also highlights the involvement of Honduran police officials in criminal activity that undermines their fellow officer's efforts and the stated public security goals of the Maduro government.

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